

2005 White House Conference on Aging
Independent Aging Event – September 26, 2005
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Post-Event Report

Priority Issue 1: Assist local efforts to understand and address common issues affecting Limited English Proficient (LEP) older adults

Barriers: Lack of funding, technical assistance

Proposed Solutions: Provide federal funding to organize multi-lingual, multi-ethnic local coalitions to address interpretation and other common issues affecting LEP older adults

Priority Issue 2: Improve service to LEP Medicaid recipients

Barriers: Interpretation and translation services are inadequately funded within the Medicaid program; bilingual and bicultural staffing requirements re: certification are overly-stringent, making it difficult to hire staff

Proposed Solutions: Earmark Medicaid funds to adequately fund interpretation and translation services; provide waivers of certification requirements for staffing and/or allow for development plans for employees working towards

Priority Issue 3: Develop a more flexible citizenship timetable for LEP older adults

Barriers: Citizenship is required in order to receive Social Security benefits. The current requirement (completion within 7 years) does not allow sufficient time for older adults who may learn more slowly or who have had problems with citizenship applications

Proposed Solution: Extend the citizenship time frame for older adults; change requirements to allow for flexibility in case of complications such as language ability and/or application processing

Priority Issue 4: Develop written materials about key programs affecting LEP older adults in languages other than English, as well as in oral modes of dissemination, i.e., tapes, videos, for LEP older adults without literacy skills

Barriers: LEP older adults do not receive information that is understandable to them

Proposed Solutions: Develop and disseminate key written materials, audios, and videotapes, particularly regarding medical and legal issues, in other languages.

Priority Issue 5: Improve the quality of translation services, particularly in the areas of medical and legal translation

Barriers: Lack of oversight, standards, and training

Proposed Solution: Develop federal standards for interpretation, training, and oversight. Earmark funding for each.

Priority Issue 6: Ensure that adequate information is available to consumers and human service workers about interpretation services

Barriers: It is sometimes difficult to locate updated information about available language services, particularly for lesser-known languages

Proposed Solution: Develop a federal data base/language bank to help identify federal, state, and local interpretation services

Priority Issue 7: Share already-translated documents critical to older adults with human service providers

Barriers: Lack of access to already-translated versions of documents, results in many organizations wasting resources by “re-creating the wheel”

Proposed Solution: Develop a federal clearinghouse of common medical and legal documents translated into many languages

Priority Issue 8: Strengthen the enforcement of civil rights laws and policies

Barriers: Inadequate staffing for monitoring laws and policies; low level of consumer awareness of laws; no clearly enforce consequences

Proposed Solution: Develop stronger monitoring programs and enforce consequences for non-compliance, e.g., loss of federal funding

Priority Issue 9: Educate LEP older adults about their civil rights

Barriers: No one appears to be taking responsibility for ensuring that this happens. There is a large information gap re: civil rights.

Proposed Solutions: Partner with local organizations and provide adequate funding to conduct outreach, education, and advocacy. At a minimum, information about where/how to obtain translation services should be provided in languages of origin.

Priority Issue 10: Establish new federal priorities for education and employment in order to encourage more young people from diverse backgrounds to enter health and social service careers.

Barriers: Employment and training opportunities for LEP populations are not adequately supported

Proposed Solutions: For all agencies receiving federal funds, earmark additional funds specifically for employers to provide training in cultural competency; provide employer incentives for hiring bilingual staff.

Priority Issue 11: Provide leadership in developing a trained, culturally competent, health and human services workforce

Barriers: Lack of leadership in this area has resulted in inconsistent efforts; training is unfunded and haphazard

Proposed Solution: Schools of higher education receiving federal funds should earmark additional funds specifically to provide cultural competency training and to develop model programs to train LEP employable adults from other countries

Priority Issue 12: Update the Older Americans Act to include provisions for LEP older adults

Barriers: Currently there is no language in the Act specific to the needs of this vulnerable population, resulting in LEP older adults falling between the cracks

Proposed Solution: Add language to the Older Americans Act highlighting LEP older adults as among those with “the greatest economic and social need”

Priority Issue 13: Ensure English language program accessibility for older adults, even after citizenship is granted

Barriers: Some older adults need extra help with language issues to navigate daily living

Proposed Solutions: Ensure adequate funding for English language training and increase awareness of training programs among LEP older adults, including those who are citizens. Also, recognize that as with the general population, there are LEP older adults who are mentally and physically impaired, affecting their ability to comprehend the language

Priority Issue 14: Conduct national research to learn about the contributions of LEP older adults throughout the country

Barriers: Lack of leadership, information dissemination

Proposed Solution: The Administration on Aging should identify some of the key contributions of LEP older adults and develop educational materials for dissemination

Priority Issue 15: Increase the availability and accessibility of culturally competent resources to address the needs of LEP older adults

Barriers: Resources are limited or are available only to specific segments of the LEP population, e.g., older refugees. Many at-risk LEP older adults are left without access to culturally sensitive materials.

Proposed Solutions: Promote the philosophy that cultural competency needs ongoing attention and cannot be relegated to a single event. Disseminate culturally sensitive materials to a wider audience of LEP older adults.